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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8047

INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0269

RHBAVAKS/COMUSNAVCENT PRIORITY

RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 MANAMA 000536

SIPDIS

STATE FOR S/P JARED COHEN AND INR/BIO

BAGHDAD FOR AMBASSADOR ERELI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/07/2018

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SUBJECT: THE SHI'A CLERICAL HIERARCHY IN BAHRAIN REF: A. 04 MANAMA 378 B. 06 MANAMA 710 C. 06 MANAMA 1728 D. MANAMA 253 E. MANAMA 420 F. MANAMA

1.(U) Summary: This message describes Bahrain's leading Shi'a clerics and their organization, the Ulama Council. End Summary. -----
2.(U) About two thirds of Bahrain's citizens are Shi'a. The Bahraini Shi'a look to a few senior clerics (Ulama) in Bahrain as their principal guides.
3.(C) Bahraini Shi'a clerics tend not to disclose whom they support financially or to whom they refer for guidance (i.e. their Marja'). Most Bahraini clerics are affiliated with one of the major Shi'a clerical families.
4.(U) A cleric's rank does not directly correspond to his level of influence. The clerics identified below are the top ten clerics based on the influence they have in Bahrain.
5.(U) Leading Shi'a clerics, acting independently of the government, established Bahrain's Ulama Council in October, 2004, with the following functions:
6.(U) The Ulama council is comprised of a general assembly, a central commission, an executive administration, and a women's administration. The Ulama Council is the highest Shi'a clerical body in Bahrain.
7.(U) The Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs claims responsibility for overseeing all mosques, ma'tams, endowments, and the Sharia court system.
8.(C) Sheikh Isa Qassim (Rank: 1, Influence: 1, Scholarship: 1) -- Most Bahrainis view Sheikh Isa Qassim as the senior Shi'a cleric. He and Sheikh Ali Salman are the most influential Shi'a clerics in Bahrain.
9.(C) Sheikh Hussein Najati (Rank: 2, Influence: 2, Scholarship: 3) -- Najati, the other Faqih, is not a member of the Ulama Council, but generally agrees with the Ulama Council's decisions.
10.(C) Sheikh Mohammed Sanad (Rank: 3, Influence: 10, Scholarship: 2) -- Sanad is not a member of the Ulama Council, but generally agrees with the Ulama Council's decisions.
11.(C) Sheikh Abduljalil Al Moqdad (Rank: 4, Influence: 6, Scholarship: 4) -- Al Moqdad is not a member of the Ulama council. He was born in the 1940s.
12.(C) Sheikh Abdulhussein Al Sitri (Rank: 5, Influence: 7, Scholarship: 7) -- Al Sitri is a member of the Ulama Council, but does not hold an executive position.
13.(C) Sayed Jawad Al Wadaee (Rank: 6, Influence: 3, Scholarship: 9) -- Al Wadaee is a member of the Ulama Council, but does not hold an executive position.
14.(S) Sheikh Hameed Al Mubarak (Rank: 7, Influence: 8, Scholarship: 5) -- Al Mubarak is not a member of the Ulama Council. He was born in 1962.
15.(C) Sayed Abdulla Al Ghoraifi (Rank: 8, Influence: 5, Scholarship: 8) -- Al Ghoraifi serves as the deputy chairman of the Ulama Council. Much of his influence comes from his position as a member of the Bahraini Parliament.
16.(C) Sheikh Ahmed Al Asfoor (Rank: 9, Influence: 4, Scholarship: 10) -- Sheikh Ahmed Al Asfoor is not a member of the Ulama Council. His influence comes from his position as a member of the Bahraini Parliament.
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